TELLS THE FACTS AND NAMES THE NAMES

CounterPunch

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A Lunch with Christine O'Donnell and Her People

By JoAnn Wypijewski

Wilmington, Delaware

I hadn't even collected my name badge for the GOP Unity Reception at Christine O'Donnell's new campaign headquarters in Wilmington this afternoon when a woman in the ladies' room looked at me with deep seriousness and said, "Be careful out there." My mind raced. Were there enemy agents in the hall trying to undermine Christine? Did this woman suspect that I was one of them? I was wearing an awful lot of gray and black. Maybe I was a witch? I didn't have to worry long over this before the woman began to tell me a story, rich in detail and emotion, about how Joe Biden and the Justice Department have been subsidizing rapists through the Violence Against Women Act.

"Four billion dollars... they never prosecute... the records are sealed, they say for the privacy of the women... the corporations are paying men to rape women... the men pay a fine... $5,000, it's nothing to them... hundreds of thousands of men... the money goes to nonprofits... it's all kept quiet... twenty-five women have been raped in Oxford, Pennsylvania, or that's what I've heard; I know of twelve... some may be dead... I was one of them... They told me to quit my job; quit MY job, why not arrest this man?... The police are in on it... in the town... in the state... the Justice Department said it wasn't their jurisdiction, but it certainly is through the EEOC... I want the word out; you've got to tell the women... Joe Biden is subsidizing rapists."

She was a small, taut figure, with a sparkly white sleeveless turtleneck and a long rope of hair trailing down one side almost to her waist; middle aged, agi-

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Success is Not An Option

Obama's Afghan Disaster

By Patrick Cockburn

Islamabad

The U.S. is making a somewhat desperate attempt to close down the Afghan Taliban's bases on the Pakistani side of its 2,500km-long border with Afghanistan. The U.S. military's hope of a year ago that a surge in troop numbers inside Afghanistan would turn the tide in the guerrilla war is fading fast. The Taliban have extended their grip in the north and west of the country. The one option left to America and its allies is to try to force the Pakistan army to act decisively against the Taliban in Pakistan.

It is not going to happen. The Pakistan military has become adept over the past decade at outmaneuvering Washington on this issue. The Taliban were very much Pakistan's creation in the 1990s, though the relationship has been more distant since 9/11. The army has no interest in putting the Taliban permanently out of business and, thereby, lose Pakistan's main lever over America.

It is reasonable enough for Pakistan to claim that it could not close the Afghan-Pakistan frontier that runs through some of the toughest terrain on earth and is the same distance as between London and Moscow. If the U.S.A., with its massive airpower, cannot shut its side of the border, how come the Pakistani army is expected to be more effective on the Pakistani side? Whatever the direct role of Pakistan in sustaining the insurgency in Afghanistan, the bottom line is the same for the U.S. and its allies now, as it was for the Soviet Union in the 1980s. So long as the border with Pakistan remains at least partly open, the insurgents cannot be defeated.

Pakistan recently highlighted the hold it has over the U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan by stopping their supply trucks from crossing the Afghan frontier. The ban was in retaliation for U.S. helicopters making an attack on the Pakistani side of the border and killing three Pakistani soldiers.

One comic aspect of Pakistan shutting down NATO's supply line through the Khyber Pass is that the Taliban themselves may not be too pleased to see the ban go on for too long. A senior Pakistan officer told me last week in Islamabad that he reckoned the Taliban received a large part of the $1,500 protection money, paid by trucking companies for every one of the 1,000 or so trucks entering Afghanistan each day with supplies for U.S. and NATO forces. This type of extortion may be as important to the Taliban's revenues as the heroin trade.

Local bandits have also been happy beneficiaries of the 80 per cent of supplies for foreign forces in Afghanistan, which come through Pakistani ports and are then driven north to the border. These are supposedly nonlethal goods such as fuel, spare parts, and clothing. But raids on warehouses in Peshawar by Pakistani security a few days ago discovered two NATO helicopters, waiting for a buyer. Locals tell with some merriment of another looted container that turned out to be entirely filled with whisky bottles. Religiously inclined bandits briefly thought of destroying the cargo, but were swiftly convinced by fellow villagers that it would all be sold to non-Muslims.

British Prime Minister David Cameron, during his trip to India several months ago, accused Pakistan of aiding the Taliban, and was subsequently criticized for his lack of diplomacy. In this minor row, the point was lost that the Pakistan and the Afghan insurgency are

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effectively joined at the hip. The Pakistani army may squeeze the Taliban, but it will never squeeze them to death as the Americans want.

It will not do so because the Afghan Taliban are popular in Pakistan. Most Pakistani soldiers I spoke to were happy to fight the Pakistan Taliban, whom they denounced as parasitic on the reputation of their Afghan equivalents. They see the latter as Pashtun freedom fighters combating a foreign occupation and battling for a share in power against their non-Pashtun rivals, such as the Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazara. A Pakistani colonel commanding Pashtun troops on the border wondered how American and British troops could conciliate Pashtun villagers since "xenophobia is at the heart of Pashtun culture."

A second reason why the Pakistan military is unlikely to attack the Taliban is that we may be seeing the opening moves in the endgame in Afghanistan. The four main players are the U.S.A., the Afghan government, the Taliban, and Pakistan. If the Pakistani army plays its cards right, then the outcome of any successful peace negotiations would be a power-sharing government in Kabul, in which the Taliban would play an important role. The Pashtun provinces would come under substantial Taliban control. Pakistan, with its strong influence over the Taliban, would be established as a regional power.

The American drone attacks on North Waziristan are at a level higher than at any time since they started in 2004. The killing of senior members of al-Qaeda is triumphantly announced. But the border areas of Pakistan-Afghanistan are an unlikely area from which to mastermind a plot to bomb targets in Europe. There are checkpoints on all the roads in and out of the area. Strangers are very closely watched. Jihadi fighters are much more likely to make their way overland to Somalia.

A senior Pakistan officer told me that he reckoned the Taliban received a large part of the $1,500 protection money, paid for every one of the 1,000 or so trucks entering Afghanistan each day with supplies for U.S. and NATO forces.

The mess, which is American and British strategy in Afghanistan, is exemplified by the ease with which the supplies of their forces can be choked off by Pakistan. The Pakistani army, which controls foreign and security policy in the country, is not going to kill off the Taliban at the request of the U.S. The Hamid Karzai government has less support than the communists at the time of the Soviet military withdrawal in 1988. The U.S.A. and Britain are politically weak, because they have such a feeble Afghan partner in Kabul, and militarily weak because they cannot shut the Pakistan border. They have no choice but to negotiate. **CP**

Patrick Cockburn is the author of *Muqtada: Muqtada Al-Sadr, the Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq*. He can be reached at patrick.cockburn@attglobal.net

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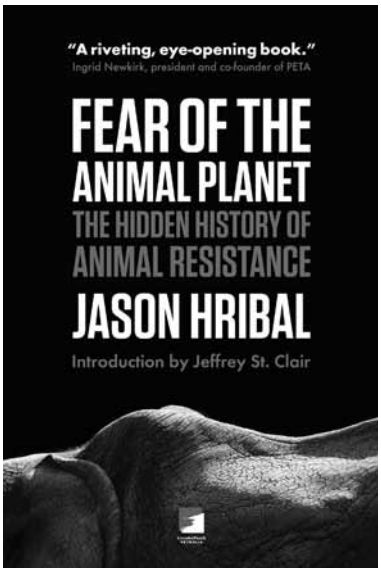
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tated, bandy arms shaking as she spoke. I felt I should soothe her, but that seemed futile. She was on automatic, with no apparent low setting. Oxford is a cesspool, she said, controlled by the Ware family.

"Look up this name, John C. Ware, W-A-R-E." Ware is, indeed, the son of a prominent and wealthy family in nearby southeast Pennsylvania, named after his grandfather, who was a Democratic congressman in the 1970s. His father was in local politics for years. Ware the Younger, a Democratic committeeman and former schoolteacher, was arrested this summer on sex charges involving three teenagers. "You don't know," this woman said, backing into a corner to steady herself. What followed was a rapid-fire resume of beastliness and corruption; a whirl of names, rapists and their protectors, a summer camp, an annual convention of sadomasochists allowed to run wild and naked in public, children raped and killed, "burned alive in the streets!"

I really didn't come to this lunch looking for damage. I had written to the O'Donnell camp a week earlier asking to be put on a press list for alerts on the candidate's public schedule, and had heard nothing back. This is standard procedure for the O'Donnell campaign; local political reporters told me they can get virtually nothing out of Team Christine and have been fielding requests like mine from other out-of-town journalists simply trying to follow the campaign. But I had also typed my name and email address into the section of the website asking the plain people to sign up for more information. And so, the grassroots side of the campaign kicked in, and I was invited to lunch.

It wasn't so much a lunch, actually – some cut-up sub sandwiches and sodas at the back of a long room – as a gathering of the Republican tribe around their new princess. The rest of the candidates were frogs: gray men, puffed up, or spindly and smirking, the type of Republicans who watched their party lose everything beginning in 2006 and now see their advantage in the perky miss with the million-dollar smile. Jostling to adjust themselves to the party's new power base, the men called her "a true Reagan Republican," and outlined their own dreams of low taxes and no regulation as if they'd been in personal colloquy with the shade of the Gipper (before he was forced to raise taxes). The Congressional candidate Glen Urquhart, a real estate executive with a miserly little grin and establishment bona fides to match, assured the crowd that he'd just been talking to former Governor Du Pont and "he gets the Tea Party... he even quoted Sarah Palin."

I tried to imagine the horn-rimmed Huguenot, a lifetime of privilege cushioned by centuries of extraction and pelf, polished at Exeter, Princeton, Harvard Law – all of that suspended for a moment's condescension to the Volk. "You betcha!" Du Pont was said to have said. Some in the crowd laughed and clapped

"The police are in on it... in the town... in the state... the Justice Department said it wasn't their jurisdiction, but it certainly is through the EEOC... I want the word out; you've got to tell the women... Joe Biden is subsidizing rapists."

hearing this. It doesn't really matter if Du Pont is a phony. O'Donnell's backers, those here anyway, aren't as ideologically pure as they are always portrayed. They understand that the prime objective of electoral politics is to win. It doesn't matter if Urquhart is a phony; here he was bowing to Christine O'Donnell in her campaign's big new office, with a couple of dozen desks and meeting space for many more volunteers, paid for with some of the millions of dollars that have flowed her way since her primary victory of September 14.

Mike Castle, savaged in that primary as an "unmanly" Obama-loving fake Republican, would be embraced in an instant if he now endorsed Christine. A retired woman in an O'Donnell T-shirt, a registered Independent who swooned at the memory of JFK, told me she thought it was awful that Castle hadn't made the traditional, gentlemanly gesture of endorsing his erstwhile opponent. An about-face seems highly unlikely. During the campaign one of O'Donnell's former staff members made an Internet video that was ostensibly about the political issues until a hurriedly asked question revealed its true purpose. "Isn't Mike Castle cheating on his wife with a man?" – an off-camera female voice asks, to which the young woman on camera laughingly replies with a shake of her pretty head and a knowing glance, "That's the rumor."

"I love the way they say, 'Well, there's a rumor,'" an infuriated Castle told the local press in the first interview after his defeat. "Who made up the damned rumor, for God's sake?" Throwing the rock, then hiding the hand, O'Donnell said at the time that she had nothing to do with the video but then repeated the "rumor" twice on the hustings herself. It was all just girlish fun, like something hatched at a high-school sleepover, or in the green room before one of her old television appearances, when excited talk of anal sex and "getting away with perversion" was always good for a bounce. The woman who'd been hoping Castle would come around acknowledged that the "rumor" business wasn't too admirable.

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"But you know, those rumors are around," another retiree chimed in, this one an ex-Democrat, whose grown-up children are fiery Tea Partyists instructing their aged mother on the creeping signs of socialism that everywhere abound. "Did you know Obama began his career in the living room of Bill Ayers?! Did you know his mentor in Hawai'i was a communist?!"

Urquhart had told the crowd, "This is America! We don't want it to become Europe." Europe is a disaster, he said. "Do you want 20 per cent unemployment and riots in the streets?" It sounded almost as bad as Oxford, Pennsylvania. Odd, I thought, that he offered Canada as a more alluring model. Sensing the crowd's impatience for the afternoon's main attraction, he didn't take the time to indulge in the pretzel logic that would have been necessary to square his admiration for that country's experience at lowering its debt ("We can do it, too!") with the right's bedrock allegiance to the U.S. war machine and hatred for Canadian-style socialistic single-payer.

At last Christine took center stage, and, with the bar set so low, how could she not be adorable? She smiled winningly and must have said "thank you" half a dozen times; in fact, that's almost all she did say. She brought a young man up to the front to highlight the reason she's in this race: a boy worried he might lose the family farm if his father kicks off and the damned death tax shatters all his dreams. "You shouldn't be worried about such things; that's for us to worry about. You should be worried about going out with girls!" O'Donnell vowed to eliminate the inheritance tax entirely, to hurrahs from the middle-class audience that never need worry about it. She thanked the volunteers again, thanked her office's new neighbors, Bancorp and Swift Financial, for being so welcoming and such inspirations of can-doism, and urged everyone to have a sandwich and some cookies.

Afterward, to a reporter she said she didn't support cutting Social Security benefits and wasn't sold on the idea of private accounts, but would consider raising the retirement age. She fended off a couple of pesky questions about her campaign financing, disarming the reporter with a joke, and then mingled with her people. It's clear why they like her. A good-time girl gone pure, at ease with her big butt and mismatched separates, casually pawing her knotted ropes of pearls and letting her hair fall free, O'Donnell looks like she feels good – wholesome, solid, simple and fun, everything the country is not and her people wish it were. Pretty but unthreatening, not suited up self-consciously like Hillary Clinton or, in a different register, Sarah Palin, she, above all, seems so nice. It doesn't matter if she is or not. Ronald Reagan wasn't nice or consistent or honest or good, and he is her closest apparent model.

Moving around the room, spreading warmth and saying nothing, she dispelled for a time the madness bearing her forth like a wave. The woman I had met in the ladies' room seemed almost calm with her hand held between O'Donnell's. The man with "Mark The Patriot" scrawled

O'Donnell said she didn't support cutting Social Security benefits and wasn't sold on the idea of private accounts, but would consider raising the retirement age.

hugely on his shirt in Magic Marker seemed almost normal. Outside I saw his truck, a Ford 4x4 jacked up on giant wheels, which he has been driving around the country like some latter-day town crier since October of 2008. The original printed sign on the back, "To: Obama And Democrat Fools," warning that "over my dead body will you steal my freedom, my religion, my money, or my guns!" is a little faded now, but it has been augmented with hand-lettered slogans – "Save America," "Obama is half white, half foreign, and all wrong for America!" The truck's tinted windows bear the waxed dictums of the day, "Live Free or Die Hard. We the People. Angry Mob on Board." **CP**

JoAnn Wypijewski is traveling across America, sending reports to *CounterPunch*. She can be reached at jwyp@earthlink.net

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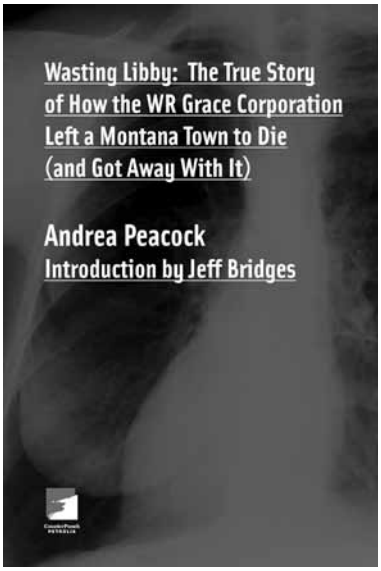
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The Battle for Moscow

By Boris Kagarlitsky

Moscow

After the forced resignation of Moscow mayor Yury Luzhkov, fired by President Medvedev last month, the ensuing commentaries by political experts in Moscow resembled a post mortem of some scuffle in a children's sandbox, focused on who offended whom and who started it first. Naturally, both the Russian and Western press have published a lot of Kremlinological nonsense, pointing to Medvedev's personal concern about the fate of the Khimki forest which provoked a later conflict with Luzhkov; they speculate about rivalry between Medvedev and Putin. However, the conflict in Khimki has been going on for three years and attracted no interest on the part of the president, though these events were quite public and scandalous. The same can be said about relations between two leading figures in the Russian state, Medvedev and Putin. Though their relations have not been without problems, nothing shows that there is any political disagreement between them. Amid other banalities, the experts conspicuously evade the prime issue, which concerns the matter of money and private material interests. People stubbornly pretend that they do not live in a capitalist system, while the federal government's TV channels drench them in stories of the staggering corruption which saturates Moscow at every level. The most conspicuous feature of these exposes is that they are being broadcast by the same media that not so long ago denied the true situation or ignored it entirely. Does anyone want to ask: why are we getting these disclosures now?

The current battle for power in Russia's capital city has been sparked by the coincidence of crises at both the local and federal levels. It's not because, during Luzhkov's 18-year reign as mayor, his wife, Elena Baturina, has become one of the richest women on the planet. Baturina's business is no more than a colorful symbol of a larger reality. For nearly two decades, Luzhkov and the Moscow City Council oversaw a vast construction empire, tied in with banks, real estate operators and a bureaucracy some of whose functionaries became shareholders in certain favored companies. Moscow's construction program not only developed in perfect isolation from the needs of the city, but grew to such a degree that it actually obstructed the real processes, structures, needs and capacities of the urban economy.

The dizzying pyramid of speculative capital was sustained only by constant credits and fresh injections of funds from the city budget. As in any financial pyramid, the need for additional capital is voracious and endless. The massive destruction of Moscow's historic buildings should not be ascribed to Mayor Luzhkov's bad taste, but to the need to constantly clear space in the heart of the city for ever more expensive construction projects. The less cost-effective and efficient these projects were, the greater was the need to launch new, even more grandiose ones. As a result, the infrastructure of Russia's capital declined at an accelerating tempo against a background of rapid road construction, which not only failed to solve the problem of traffic jams, but, on the contrary, owing to the unsystematic character of the road building, made them worse.

When the Kremlin seizes the financial cash flows, redirecting them for national needs, Muscovites will feel an acute nostalgia for the prosperity of Luzhkov's time.

If the financing of the Moscow pyramid stops, the inevitable crash will follow, the victims of which will be not only Elena Baturina and her corporation, Inteko, but many other companies as well. Unfortunately, however, money is needed not only for the capital's mayor. An urgent need to plug the financial gap had also emerged at the federal level.

This summer's fires and drought made it clear that attempts to keep the fiscal deficit under control are doomed to failure, unless there is serious reallocation of resources across the entire Russian business sector. And, first of all, in Moscow. Pressure from the federal authority on the Moscow mayor's office was inevitable. For their part, the mayor and his team, amid compounding economic crisis, have appeared unexpectedly obstinate. The issue, again, is not Yury Luzhkov's personality, but the objective situation of Moscow's prime business powers. There is no safe haven against the storm. Ahead lies bankruptcy.

In launching their war on Luzhkov, the federal authorities made a fatal mistake at the very outset, deciding to force the mayor to capitulation by means of a propaganda onslaught. But the mayor's office was not shaken by these TV exposes because there were no accompanying administrative sanctions following these documentaries. The failure to back propaganda with punitive action only demonstrated the central government's weakness and indecision. Deploying its various representatives and experts, the federal authority suggested Luzhkov to resign voluntarily, but the mayor responded with a contemptious refusal followed by a few precise, well-calculated blows. On his side, Luzkov mobilized the metropolitan organization of the United Russia Party, thus demonstrating the actual collapse of the multiyear effort to create a pro-Kremlin party of power. The most varied figures – from the leader of the Communists, Gennady Zyuganov, to the capital's chief rabbi, and from the official trade union bosses to the Nizhniy Novgorod governor, Shantsev – have started to offer Luzhkov up-front or more circumspect support.

President Medvedev and his administration found themselves in an extremely awkward position. In every possible way, they tried to finesse Luzhkov's blatant resistance, but the mayor's obduracy left them no option. Even worse, it has become clear that if, after all that has happened, Luzhkov remained as a mayor, nobody will take the Kremlin seriously anymore. At last, on September 28, president Medvedev signed the long-awaited decree about the dismissal of the mayor from his post, in connection with "a loss of confidence." Everything has been done in strict accord with the letter of our country's laws: no one requires any other reason for the official dissmissal or even an explanation of it. However, it would be naive to believe that this af-

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fair will now come to an end. On the contrary, the fight for Moscow and its vast reservoirs of capital has just begun. Declaring an exit from the United Russia Party, Luzhkov has launched his own political campaign. Together with the opposition, he demands the replacement of the current practice of appointing mayors with free elections (Muscovites remember well how elections took place in Luzhkov's 1990s phase, with the predictable consequences of installing candidates chosen well in advance). Today, there are suspiciously large numbers of people attending oppositional meetings, making exacly the same demands. And officials from Luzhkov's team still hold those same posts, without the slightest intention of giving up their positions.

The Feds, who are aiming to seize control of Moscow, will have to fight – in the literal sense – for each sector and department as if leading a street-fighting campaign for every house. Because they don't have enough staff and no plans, the battle will drag on. And when the Kremlin, finally, will seize the financial cash flows, redirecting them for national needs, the capital will experience a crash of such magnitude and force that many Muscovites, who rejoiced after the forced resignation of a mayor who became wearisome after 18 years, will feel an acute nostalgia for the prosperity of Luzhkov's time. Not only the business of Baturina, but the entire metropolitan economy will suffer. Wiped out will be tens if not hundreds of thousands of jobs, not counting, of course, the Tajik and Kyrgyz labor migrants, in whose fate there are not so many people interested anyway. In the tranquil Moscow of recent years, there will be grounds for mass discontent. And, on this basis, another attempt of a political comeback by Luzhkov and his team is quite possible. However, if the central government fails to capture Moscow's reservoirs of capital, the crisis at the national level will be bleak indeed. **CP**

Boris Kagarlitsky is director of the Institute of Globalization and Social Movements (IGSO) in Moscow and editor in chief of the *Levaya Politika* (Left Politics) quarterly. He is also coordinator of the Transnational Institute's Global Crisis project. He has written many books, including, most recently, *Empire of the Periphery: Russia and the World System* (2008).

Waiting for the Phone to Ring

Behind every Rendition There's a Renderer

By Steve Hendricks

In February of 2003, the CIA kidnapped a radical imam in Milan and shipped him to Egypt to be tortured. But the kidnappers were sloppy, and an Italian magistrate traced them through cellphone records and other clues, then tried them in absentia. Twenty-three were convicted, most under the aliases they had used in Italy. The great majority of the kidnappers have never been found, but in his new book, A Kidnapping in Milan: The CIA on Trial *(W. W. Norton, 2010), Steve Hendricks tells how he tracked down and spoke to several of them. The following is an excerpt from the book. (The Intelligence Identities Protection Act prevents Hendricks from using the spies' real names.)* AC/JSC

James Robert Kirkland (not his real name) grew up in the Ohio Valley, earned a bachelor's degree in a state adjoining his own, and dabbled in journalism and public relations before joining a police force. He served in many such forces in the U.S. and rose through the ranks until, after twenty-five years, he was appointed director of a force in a jurisdiction of a couple of million people. A few years later, he left public service to become a consultant in private security and resettled in his homeland, where cottontails and Pentecostals were thick on the ground. ("If God is your co-pilot, change seats," a church marquee near his home proclaimed. "The ten commandments aren't multiple choice," a rival offered.) From a colonnaded ranch house he and his wife commanded a substantial acreage, on which stood a great barn in fine trim and a tidy wooden fence painted in a crisp, happy color. The ensemble bespoke a well-ordered prosperity. After the kidnapping, the Kirklands bought a nearby colonial manor and turned it into a tastefully appointed country lodge, which seemed mainly the project of Mrs. Kirkland. Using the alias of one of her farm animals, she reviewed the lodge favorably on a travel website. (The hosts, she said, were superlatively nice.) Her day job, which I am reluctant to divulge specifically, involved evacuation flights not dissimilar to the ones on which Abu Omar was rendered.

One of the two SIM cards (the storage disk inside a cellphone) that Mr. Kirkland had used in Italy had been activated at the start of December of 2002, which made him one of the earliest-arriving spies, which in turn suggested he was a senior planner. During his more than two months in Italy, he, or someone using his SIM, had been a prolific caller to the United States, calling numbers that belonged to his octogenarian mother, his then girlfriend (the present Mrs. Kirkland), the veterinarian who cared for their farm animals, an apparent stockbroker, an apparent accountant, and himself, which is to say the landline in his (and now Mrs. Kirkland's) home. He, or someone using his SIM, had also called an unregistered mobile phone in his home area code, which number my assistant Jessica called five years later. A man answered, and Jessica told him about our search for a CIA officer, or CIA hireling, named James Robert Kirkland. The man replied that he didn't know anyone

Mrs. Kirkland returned, and both Kirklands professed great surprise that I had come to talk about a rendition. They knew almost nothing about renditions except that a movie called *Rendition* had been recently released. Was that the case I was looking into?

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named James Robert Kirkland and that if he himself was a CIA agent, he didn't know that either.

"We think," Jessica said, "that this Kirkland might know someone who uses this cellphone. Have you had it since 2003?"

"Yes."

"Would you tell me your name?"

"I'd rather not."

"Do you know anyone named——?" – here mentioning Kirkland's real name.

There was a very long pause.

"Yes, I do," the man finally said. Jessica, who has the exuberance of youth, said he sounded "creeped the f--- out."

"Alright, well –" she began.

"Thank you," the man said, "goodbye."

We were pretty sure we had our Kirkland. I was further encouraged in this belief by a photo I had found of the real Kirkland that compared favorably with the very dark (and therefore indeterminate) copy of the photo on the passport he had used in Italy. The two men, or, rather more probably, one man, of the photos had the same shape of head, which was more long than round; the same ears, long also; the same hair, close-cropped or lacking; the same unobtrusively sized nose; the same distance between the eyes; the same crease running from a spot between the eyebrows down the bridge of the nose; and the same crooked smile, which tugged up at the left side. I traveled to the Kirklands' farm to see for myself.

When I arrived at the front door, Mrs. Kirkland, a slender woman of middle age, motioned through a window that I should walk around to the side of the house, where a large den had been added. Her first words on opening the side door were, "How did you find us?" It didn't seem like the greeting of an innocent.

I explained that I was interested in speaking with her husband about some of his law enforcement work, and she asked me to wait and left me in the den. It was homey – every surface draped in shawls, a watercolor in progress in one corner, a blaze in the hearth. Presently Mrs. Kirkland returned with her husband and a more composed countenance. The former was absurdly well preserved. On an earlier attempt that day to find them at home, I had spied a bench press in one of the outbuildings, and it was not hard to imagine Mr. Kirkland using it to ward off his more than sixty years. He was more agile than brawny, however, and he spent half the interview with his legs draped over the side of an armchair.

The Kirklands encouraged me to sit, and while Mrs. Kirkland fetched me a Diet Coke, I told Mr. Kirkland about my search. He said he guessed he ought to ask if I had some identification to prove I was who I said I was, and I gave him my business card. He looked at it, then he guessed he ought to ask if I had other identification – a driver's license, say – and I gave him that too. He studied the watermark before transcribing my vitals, which I was sure were bound for the CIA. It was the only time in my career I have been carded.

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Mrs. Kirkland returned, and both Kirklands professed great surprise that I had come to talk about a rendition. They knew almost nothing about renditions except that a movie called *Rendition* had been recently released. Was that the case I was looking into? I said the movie seemed to be a composite of cases, but it had been poorly reviewed, so I hadn't seen it. I explained the essentials of Abu Omar's rendition and the phone calls that James Robert Kirkland had made from Italy to the family and associates of the real Kirkland in the Ohio Valley.

Mr. Kirkland said he had no idea why someone in Italy might have called his mother, his home, his wife, and other people he knew. For a few minutes he and Mrs. Kirkland hypothesized explanations. Finally, he remembered that in or around 2003 his wallet had been stolen from a hotel room near Miami Beach. He had reported the robbery to the police, but nothing had come of it. Not long later, someone had tried to use his stolen credit cards, and he had had to change all of them and also several other accounts and his driver's license. I knew the passport of the Italian Kirkland had been issued in Miami, and I wondered if this story was meant to explain the new identity he had acquired there.

Mr. Kirkland also said that after his wallet was stolen, he and Mrs. Kirkland got a lot of strange phone calls. I asked what was strange about the calls, and he uhhhed and erred for a while, from which I surmised that he was unable to manufacture an answer. Eventually he said that, well, Mrs. Kirkland had said she received some strange calls. I turned to Mrs. Kirkland and asked what was strange about them, but she could offer nothing either – not that the callers hung up as soon as she answered, not that there was heavy breathing, not that someone asked her to describe her undergarments. The calls were just *strange*. Notwithstanding his decades in law enforcement, Mr. Kirkland never tried to find out whether the caller could be identified, let alone traced to the person who stole his wallet. As for how Kirkland's mother or his veterinarian or the others had come to be called, he now remembered that he kept in his wallet a list of numbers of people he often called. Evidently, he had failed to memorize his mother's number, though it seems she had had it for many years.

I wasn't sure why the robber would want to call people close to Kirkland. "Wouldn't that just increase the chances the robber would be caught?" I said.

He explained that the robber was probably trying to establish himself in Kirkland's identity.

"From *Italy*?"

"It could happen."

A little later he said, "So, tell me again what was the name of the man who was captured?"

"Abu Omar."

"Abu – Abu what?"

"Omar."

"Omar, Omar. You spell that "O-M?" – he searched his mind for what might come next – "A? R?"

"Yes."

"So where did all this take place, again?"

"Milan. Then they drove him to Aviano."

"What's Aviano?"

"An air force base."

"Oh, it's an air force base? Is it ours?"

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He was trying too hard. But I was not actually embarrassed for him until he said, "And what will happen if the accused are tried in, in" – he paused and searched for the term – "in absentia? Is that what you call it?" There were not many senior law enforcers who, after a quarter century in the field, were unfamiliar with the term.

At another point he fretted that if I had been led to him in error, terrorists could be as well.

"It might sound paranoid," he said, "but we don't give them enough credit for how smart they are. No one thought 9/11 would happen, but it did."

I agreed.

"So, what can we do about it?" he said. "How can we put this to bed?"

"I suppose you could contact the CIA."

"No, I don't want to get involved with the CIA. What else can we do?"

I suggested that a man with his years in law enforcement might know people better able than I to answer the question. He seemed to see reason in this, then said, "You seem responsible. You're not going to use our names, right?"

"How about I print your names and say you deny any involvement in the kidnapping?"

He did not think this sounded like a good idea. He said he and Mrs. Kirkland would just be tarred by association, and he quoted a famous law enforcer he once worked with who said of such denials, "The truth never catches up to the lies."

Her first words on opening the side door were, "How did you find us?" It didn't seem like the greeting of an innocent.

He did not seem to see the irony of deploying the aphorism in the present context.

Before I left, both Kirklands urged me to see *Vantage Point*, another recently released movie. In this one, swarthy terrorists killed Europeans by the hundred and nearly assassinated the visiting American president before being undone by a resourceful federal agent who, even before the movie began, had taken a bullet for the commander in chief. The Kirklands found it compelling in the utmost. I did not rush out to see it, as it had been even more poorly reviewed than *Rendition*, but on a plane home from Kirkland's trial in Milan, I saw it in all its dumbed-down glory and had no trouble seeing Kirkland picture himself as the heroic agent saving Western Civilization to presidential admiration.

I bade the Kirklands goodbye. To leave their property, I had to continue up the long driveway past the den to a turnaround loop, then drive back down past the den before heading out the front gate. On my first pass, the Kirklands stood by the fireplace and waved pleasantly, if restrainedly. On my second pass, Mrs. Kirkland had dropped to a chair and put a fist to her mouth, as though biting her knuckles. As I continued down the drive, I glanced over my shoulder and saw her head drop into her hands. **CP**

Steve Hendricks is a freelance reporter who lives in Knoxville, Tennessee, and Helena, Montana.

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